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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 000583

SIPDIS

GUATEMALA FOR COMATT: DTHOMPSON
STATE FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EFIS](#) [SENV](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: GOH PROPOSAL FOR SHRIMP RECERTIFICATION

REF: (A) SECSTATE 06760 (B) TEGUCIGALPA 116 (C) SECSTATE 54094

1. (U) Summary and Action Request. On February 19, 2003, the Honduran Ministry of Agriculture, along with the Department of Fisheries, sent the Embassy their proposal for improvement of enforcement of turtle excluder device (TED) regulations (ref a) following the January 2003 decision to decertify Honduras, effectively banning the exportation of wild Honduran shrimp to the U.S. Immediate tasks the GOH plans to undertake include sanctioning vessels found in violation of TEDs requirements, reactivation of an agreement between private, military and government agencies to finance patrolling and auditing of vessels, canceling fishing licenses of boats found in violation of fishing regulations, inspecting all fishing vessels in port during the off-season prior to issuance of new licenses, and creation of new fishing laws to give the GOH better legal grounds for prosecution of boat owners found in violation. The Minister has requested assistance from the US for training of officials and fishermen. Department is requested to provide guidance for a response to this training request. End Summary.

2. (U) EconOff notified GOH officials in January 2003 of the failed TEDs inspection and subsequent pending de-certification from exportation of Honduran commercially harvested shrimp to the U.S. as a result of their failure to comply with TEDs requirements (ref b). In response to the demarche and inspection report (ref a), the Ministry of Agriculture, along with its Department of Fisheries, have come up with a plan for improving fishing regulations and compliance with TEDs requirements. In order to avoid evasion of the country's fisheries regulations, especially that part dealing with TEDs devices, the GOH plans on taking the following steps:

- The GOH is sanctioning and fining the ships that were found in violation of TEDs with the nets sewn closed in the amount of L 50,000.00 lempiras (approximately USD 2,900) each for the vessels Wendy Weather, Admiral, and Carnival V.

- Reactivation of the agreement between the Department of Fisheries (Digepesca), the National Merchant Marines, the Honduran Naval Forces, and the Caribbean Association of Fisheries in order to finance patrols, fishing controls and auditing of fishing vessels, both aboard the fishing ships and at the processing plants at the time of off-loading of their catch.

- Canceling the fishing licenses of the shrimp boats that fail to correctly install and/or utilize TEDs devices.

- Complete inspections of all shrimp fishing vessels that will be in port during the off season from February 1, 2003 to July 16, 2003, in order to ensure that all boats have the required TEDs devices installed prior to issuance of a fishing license.

- Continue to convene periodic meetings between GOH officials and representatives of the fishing industry (APESCA) to establish a guide for better control and performance of fishing activities.

- Immediate application of Ministerial Agreements for regulation of acts which infringe on the National Fishing Law, its regulations and annexes.

- Drafting and adoption of a new Fishing Law and regulations in order to have a legal instrument that will permit the GOH to severely sanction shrimp or other fishing boat owners who are in violation of the law.

- Request assistance from the U.S. Fisheries Service (through the State Department OES Bureau) for the training of Honduran inspectors and fishermen in the installation, manufacturing and maintenance of TEDs devices.

3. (U) Note: EmbOff was approached on a 2/27 trip to Roatan by several shrimp fishermen asking what the GOH was doing to rectify Honduras' failure of the TEDs inspection and subsequent exclusion of importation of captured shrimp. Both GOH officials and fishermen are aware of the potential

economic impact of the failed inspection and express a desire to rectify the situation as expeditiously as possible. End note.

PALMER